Vol. IV. Numb. 47

The EXAMINER.

From Friday November 13, to Monday November 16, 1713.

Fatis agimur; cedite fatis. *Seneca* Trag.

I Hear abundance of People talk very freely of the *Date* and *Period* of a *Miniſtry*; and ſome of thoſe who ſpend their Judgments on this Subject, pretend to be as Zealous for the Government as any of their Neighbours, and to be as much in the Intereſt of thoſe Great Patriots, whom *Her Majeſty* has placed at the Helm of the State. In a Conſtitution, which hangs together by ſo many minute Parts, and which depends upon ſuch Variety of Wheels and Motions, where *Power* and *Freedom* are in a perpetual Flux and Reflux, gaining ground every Day upon each other, we muſt of neceſſity be liable to Turns and Contingencies, and in ſpite of the Maxims of Cardinal *Richlieu*, be more in the Power of Fortune, than other People who move in a lower Orb, and are Maſters of no more Wiſdom and Policy, than may ſerve to furniſh them with the common Neceſſaries and Comforts of retired Life. Conſidering this great Uncertainty of a *Free State*, and the many intricate Dependencies with which that Syſtem is incumber'd, every *Miniſter*, in ſuch a Service ſtands upon a *Pinnacle*; and in the midſt of all his Grandeur has a *Sword* hanging over his Head, and held back only by the precarious Force of a ſingle *Horſe-hair*. The Smiles of a Sovereign, the Favour of the Multitude, the Advice and Aſſiſtance of many wiſe and able Men united in the ſame publick Undertaking, and, above all, the Bleſſing of Providence upon a juſt and honourable Cauſe, are mighty Supports, and will enſure the Poſſeſſion of Power a long time, to thoſe, who uſe it in the purſuit of the many great Ends, for which it was entruſted to a few Individuals, rather than to the *Collective Body* of Mankind. But even theſe Advantages have fail'd the wiſeſt of our *Species*: Succeſs has often baulk'd the nobleſt Cauſe: The *Hero* has gone to the other World for his Triumph, and left his Enemies in poſſeſſion of every Thing, but of that *Poſthumous* Glory, which adorn'd an empty Name, after the Owner of it had fallen in the Cauſe of Virtue and Juſtice. This Uncertainty is redoubled, and becomes a perfect *Lottery*, where-ever Strife and Contention are let looſe in a Nation, where *Factions* rage and worry one another, and even the Government it ſelf is treated as a *Party*. Under theſe Circumſtances, a *Miniſtry* is oblig'd to act in another Capacity, than that which properly belongs to them: They muſt ſometimes act like *Military*, as well as *Civil* Officers, draw forth their Forces, and appear at the Head of Squadrons and Battalions, whenever *Faction* takes the Field, and declares open War again them. There wants but very little of bringing Things, as they now ſtand, to this deplorable *Criſis*: We ſee the Government, both *Majeſty* and *Miniſtry*, publickly Defam'd and Inſulted: Every Man chuſes his Side and his Leaders, without regard to Duty or Allegiance, and ſtands forth to meet the oppoſite Party, upon all Occaſions, where *Faction* is allow'd to play over the moſt diſmal Scenes of Madneſs and Violence, without coming to an open Rupture, and breaking out into *Overt-acts* of *Treaſon* and *Murder*. In this Caſe, if a *Miniſtry*, by avoiding one Extream, will run into another, equally Dangerous; if whilſt they generouſly decline ſecuring themſelves at the Hazard of the *Publick Liberties*, they grow Tame and inſenſible of Injuries, and ſuffer the *Fermentation* to get a head, and infect the whole Maſs of the Body Politick, it is natural for their Enemies to take Advantage of this eaſie Diſpoſition, and to keep up the Animoſity, widen the Diviſion, and go on to make an Intereſt with the Mob, by vain Fears and falſe Alarms of Danger; till, in ſome favourable Juncture, they wreſt the *Sword* out of thoſe Hands, which had ſo long *borne it in vain*.

The Poſſeſſion of Power, amidſt theſe Difficulties, is almoſt as great an Uncertainty as the *Fortune of War*, and ſtands expoſed to as many Turns and Croſs Accidents. Every *Month* produces a new *Siege*, or a *Battle of Parties*; and becauſe Intereſt, not Honour, is the aim of the Aggreſſors, *they*, who have moſt to loſe, are moſt apparently in danger. Theſe Conſiderations amount to a full Proof, that the beſt of Patriots are more expoſed to Mortality, as *Miniſters of State*, than as *Men*; and yet the more Hazards they run, and the more liable they are to Diſſolution, the leſs poſſible is it for us to fix *Dates* to their Power, and aſſign a *Period* to their Greatneſs, not asking Leave of the *Prerogative*. Without a ſteady Train of wiſe Meaſures, and an Uniformity in Conduct, exactly fitted to the Nature of the Conſtitution, and the Temper of the People, it is impoſſible that any *Miniſtry* ſhould be of long Duration: And yet even the Beſt of Men, thus qualified, and acting by theſe Principles, cannot promiſe to themſelves, tho' with the Conſent of the Crown, an uninterrupted *Run* and *Series* of Proſperity. There is a blind Chance, more ſecret than any of their Counſels, which, like their *Evil Genius*, haunts and incommodes them; and an unſeen Fatality mingles with their wiſeſt Deſigns, and often gives them an unhappy Turn, which no human Caution could foreſee or prevent. For the Nature of *Free States* is ſuch, that tho' the whole Syſtem be leaſt expoſed to final Overthrow, yet by being over-curiouſly wrought, the ſeveral Parts are more ſubject to frequent Alterations, than in any other Plan whatever. Beſides, if we take in all *Wordly Politicks* at one general View, what, in reſpect to our weak ſelves, we often call *Chance*, is, no doubt, in it ſelf, a diviner Principle, and may be term'd *Providence*: For the Great Governor of the World always intending either to *Reward* or *Puniſh*, tho' we know not which of thoſe two Events is to take place, both of them being indifferent in this Life, therefore it is impoſſible for us to form ſuch good Deſigns, or concert Meaſures ſo very wiſely, but he can convert both to our Ruin and Confuſion: And juſt ſo it is impoſſible for our Enemies to lay Projects for our Deſtruction, and invent Schemes of Miſchief, which he cannot make ſubſervient to our Welfare and Happineſs. As it was ſaid of the Great *Coſmo*, Founder of the *Tuſcan* State, That whilſt he ſlept, or play'd, or was wholly unactive, Fortune, at the ſame time, was contriving ſuch Things for him, as ſecur'd him in the Poſſeſſion of whatever his Ambition aim'd at, whilſt himſelf had all the Glory of thoſe Events, as if manag'd by his own Wiſdom and Induſtry: So it may be as juſtly affirm'd of much greater Stateſmen, that whilſt they are buſie in Council, toiling and ſwearing for the Publick, an unforeſeen fatal Chance may turn the wiſeſt of their Meaſures to their own and their Country's Diſadvantage. Such is the unavoidable Condition of State-Affairs; the leaſt Defect in point of Conduct, hazards the nobleſt Undertaking, and yet the higheſt Perfection of Wiſdom may however be follow'd by the moſt unlucky Events, and iſſue in Ruin and Confuſion.

Such

Such of my Fellow-Subjects as busy themselves in making Enquiries into the Age and Duration of the *present Ministry*, and in finding out its utmost *Date* and *Period*, whilst they profess to be Zealous for its Honour and Interest, ought to change the Search, and look into their own Hearts for Truth and Sincerity. They have certainly a Spice of the *Whig*, and do not know it. They delight in *Changes* and *Revolutions*, and want to see a Sett of new Faces at *Court*. If they envy'd those, who were got a Step or two above them, how well soever they became their Honours, they will naturally receive a tacit Pleasure from being Witnesses to their *Mortification*. Or perhaps they are a little *Piqu'd*, because themselves and their Friends did not come so far into Play as they expected; and therefore they would gladly see others disappointed for Company. But whoever moves by any of these Springs, betrays a base corrupted Disposition, and is a Scandal to a Good Cause, notwithstanding the loudest and most sanguine Professions.

I must freely own, I cannot think of any remote Probability, or even Possibility of a Change in the *present Ministry*, without the most *dreadful Apprehensions*; more Dreadful to my Country, than the *HORRIBLE EXPECTATIONS* of the *Whigs* can be Entertaining to that Party. I cannot think of this, without imagining new Burthens laid upon *Great Britain*, more insupportable than the Yoke she lately shook off. I must suppose a new *War* broke out abroad, and perhaps another at home at the same Time; without being able to see to an End of either. The utmost Relief I can then hope for, is a short Interval of Ease now and then, from the Variety of Oppressions, and Multitude of Tyrants. We all know, how fast our *Old Masters* Posted to the Goal of their Ambition, and the Accomplishment of our Ruin: What would they do, should they again get into the Chariot, now they are whetted with Anger and Disappointment, eager for Revenge, heated with fresh Rage, and have so many new Passions added to their former, to which both We and They were doom'd for Slaves, without Redemption? Their Measures are now broken, and their ablest Managers dispers'd; should they suddenly return to Power, in these shatter'd Circumstances, even their own unprepar'd Condition, and the Divisions that reign among them, would be an intolerable Plague to the State. Perhaps their *Mars*, whom they have made something more than a *Demi-god*, since he fell for them, would then think a *Limited Throne* too narrow for his Merit, as he is the Deliverer of *Europe*. He would scarce believe himself secure, till we were all Shackled at his Feet; and I question if he would ever more bear the Menaces, or listen to the *Republican Schemes* of his Coadjutors of the *Junta*. The *Queen*, the *Church*, and the *Hanover Succession*, would then indeed be pass'd Danger: And tho' I cannot deny, but that there are many Great and Able Men, among my Fellow-Subjects, in the same Interest with the *Present Ministry*, and fit to fill the highest Posts of Trust and Honour; on which account, I am somewhat the less concern'd for their Mortality; yet the Tryal at this time is extreamly dangerous, and may serve to open an unhappy Breach, whereat all our old inveterate Foes may enter and devour us. I am not for a *Ministry*, any more than for a *General*, *for Life*; neither would I reckon this Point among the Fundamentals of our Government: But yet considering present Circumstances, and the ticklish Nature of that *Crisis*, which is now before us, I cannot forbear saying, that next to the *Persons*, who have an immediate Interest in the *Crown*, these Men ought to be most Dear to us; not so much out of Duty, as they are our *Superiors*, nor yet out of Gratitude, as they have been our Deliverers, as out of a Principle of *Self-Interest*, because they seem to be the *only Men*, able and willing to compleat our Happiness, and to settle it upon solid and lasting Foundations: And that therefore we ought to be as Jealous of their Honour, and as much Concern'd for their Safety, as they are for the Safety and Honour of the State; and more a great deal than they are for their own.

I am not treating this Subject with any Regard to my own Fears, or those of my Friends; tho' perhaps with too much Regard to the Clamours of the *Whigs*. They may redouble their Noise and Fury, because the *Ministry* are out of their reach: And indeed, humanely speaking, and with all due Deference to *Providence* and *Chance*, and to *Whig* and *Tory*, the Adorers of both, I cannot Foresee any Evil Accident, or Violence *from without*, which can shake or Overturn the *Present Ministry*. They have a vast Majority in the *Legislature*. The *Clergy*, *Gentry* and *Populace*, are entirely with them. The various Artifices and Attempts, that have been us'd to alienate their Affections, have only serv'd to expose the Authors of them to common Contempt and Resentment. The *Whigs* secretly own, that they have surmounted the worst Difficulties: Their present Frenzy is all Affectation, a Proof of a baffled Cause, and the Language of Despair. We daily see, what a hard shift they make, to hang together; what strong Cordials they prepare to keep up each other's Spirits, and with what wretched Delusions they buoy up a sinking *Faction*, and preserve an expiring Flame upon the Snuff, in Stink and Twilight. When they were in Power, it was necessary to the carrying on of their Designs, that a *good Queen* should be made at least their *Equal*, if not their *Inferior*; for which reason, they lower'd the Prerogative; and in any other Hands but *Her Majesty's*, had left it unable to exert it self, in its own Defence. But it is the Security of the *Present Ministry*, that they are Governed by the *Queen*, and act as Creatures of the *Prerogative*. The Great *Elizabeth*, whose Steps *Her Majesty* treads in, and marks with new Lustre, had more Power over *Her* Ministers, than all Her Predecessors; and being a perfect Judge of Men, was, for that very Reason, most constant in Her Favours to those, who had served *Her* faithfully, and done most Good to the Publick. In fine, if there be any Danger of the *present Ministry*, it must arise from among themselves, and they only are answerable for it: But we must have a care of Credulity, so long as there are *Whigs*, to *Clamour* and *Whisper*. Can we believe, that a few *Factious* Medlers shall be able to divide those, who know they have no other way left to subdue them? Can we think, that any private Suspicions should rest upon such Men, as have acquitted every publick Trust so faithfully? Or can we suppose, that They should differ about Shares of Honour and Profit, who voluntarily undertook the greatest Toils, for the sake of hazarding all in the Service of their Country? When the *Whigs* Clamour with a little Consistency, one may profit by as much Attention: But by all the Facts and publick Occurrences extant, these Men seem to aim at the Character of the Great *Brandon*, Duke of *Suffolk*; of whom it is Recorded; *That he never was out of Favour with his Prince, nor Unfortunate in any Undertaking.*

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